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A

CENTENNIAL ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT

UPTON, MASS.,

JUNE 25, 1835,

BY BENJAMIN WOOD,
PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

BOSTON:
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ADDRESS.

In the history of all nations, there are eras and events of peculiar importance. It shows us mankind engaged in pursuits common to men in every age. It exhibits the usual, and natural operations of pride and ambition — plans of empire formed — cities founded — new discoveries made, and settlements established. Hence, every day of the revolving year, becomes in its course, to one people or another, the anniversary of some thing memorable, which, befell their forefathers, and is remembered by their sons, either with joy or sorrow.

Never, before, did we assemble in this consecrated house, on an occasion like the present, and we never shall again. — The days, the months, and the years, of a *Century* are now numbered, which gave a distinct and corporate existence to this town. We have, therefore, come together to converse with generations, *now* sleeping in their graves — with our fathers, who fell the first trees on our rocky hills, and prepared our fields for the plough — yes, we have here come to survey their doings; and to catch from their lips, though sealed in silence, a history of their joys, their toils, their labors, and their sufferings.

But, in doing this, we must recur to the records, they have left behind, which, however, time has greatly defaced, and many dates wholly obliterated. Such a retrospect will, doubtless, be interesting especially to the inhabitants of this place, and it may be useful and instructive to our chidren's children. In prosecuting the object before me, I will first exhibit the *civil* history of the town.

That tract of land now called *Upton*, previous to its organization, was taken from Sutton on the West, Uxbridge and Mendon on the South, and Hopkinton on the East. Some of the *first settlers* on these lands, so far as I have been able to learn, from the best authenticated documents, were John Hazeltine, David Batchelor, Jonathan Wood, Israel Taft, John Sadler, William Johnson, John Bromly, William Green, Benjamin Perham, Samuel Nelson, Stephen Denny, Samuel Watkins, Marshal Baker, Samuel Work, Samuel Reeks, and John Warfield. These families thus situated, living at so great a distance from any place of public worship, that it was extremely difficult for them to attend, respectfully petitioned the several towns above mentioned, to be set off for the purpose of being incorporated into a town. — After much trouble and delay, they obtained their consent. Accordingly, in January 31, 1733, a petition signed by John Hazeltine and others, was sent to the Colonial government, praying that the Court would order the petitioners, with their families and estates into a seperate township. Their prayer was heard and answered. The act of incorporation was formally passed, June 14, 1735, O. S. in the words following:

"Whereas the out lands of the several towns of Sutton, Uxbridge, Mendon and Hopkinton, are completely filled with inhabitants, who labor under difficulties by reason of their remoteness from places of public worship in said towns, and have thereupon addressed this Court, that they may be set off, and vested with all the powers and privileges that other towns are vested with in this province; Be it therefore enacted, by his Excellency the Governor, Council, and Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, that all the lands in the aforesaid Towns, containing in the whole twelve thousand nine hundred and forty-three acres, together with one hundred and forty-one taken off from Mr. John Rockwood's farm, be, and hereby are set off into a distinct and seperate township, by the name of Upton. In three days, after the passing of this bill, the House of Representatives

ordered that Mr. John Hazeltine, one of the principle inhabitants of said town in the County of Worcester, be, and hereby is fully authorized and impowered to assemble the freeholders and other qualified voters, as soon as may be, in some convenient place to make choice of town officers, to stand till the anniversary meeting in March next. On the 28th of July following, the first town meeting was holden, agreeably to the provisions of this act, at the house of Mr. John Sadler. At this meeting, the Selectmen with other appropriate officers, were elected, which gave the first impulse to the operations of this infant member of the body politic.

As the civil interests of some parts of this town were deeply effected by the *lease* and *common* lands, it will be important that some account be given why they were *so called* and in what manner the incumberance to which they were lawfully subjected was removed.

Edward Hopkins came to this country in 1637, and settled in Connecticut where he was Governor several years, and then returned to England, became a member of Parliament and having filled with credit some other important stations in the government, made his Will and died in 1657. Besides giving his whole estate in New England to pious and charitable uses; he ordered £500 sterling to be paid out of his estate in England to Trustees in six months after the death of his wife, to be invested in houses and lands in New England, and the income, after deducting one tenth part, to be applied, three tenths of it to the support of four students in Divinity at Harvard College, and one fourth to the support of five boys at the Grammar school in Cambridge. The one tenth part, which was deducted was to be applied to the purchase of books for presents to meritorious undergraduates at the College. Anne Hopkins his wife, survived her husband forty-one years and died December 17, 1698. After her death, the payment of the legacy was refused, and a suit instituted in Chancery for its recovery. Lord Harevurt, finally decreed, that the £500 legacy with interest amounting in all to £800, should be paid to twenty-

one trustees, all inhabitants of Massachusetts, for the purpose aforesaid. The money was not paid to the trustees till the year 1715. In this year the Hopkins' trustees petitioned the legislature for leave to purchase Maguncog of the Natick Indians, which was granted, and the land so purchased, together with a tract of land lying between it and Sutton was incoporated by the name of Hopkinton.

In 1716, the General Court freely gave to the trustees of the legacy of Edward Hopkins, all the Province lands contained within the town of Hopkinton, to be appropriated to the purpose of the trust. Both tracts of land amounted to about 25,000 acres. In the same year, 1716, the trustees agreed upon the terms of their leases, which were to run ninety-nine years from the 25th of March, 1723; and the tenants were to pay an annual rent of three pence per acre during that term, and not exceeding ninepence an acre after, and the trustees agreed to pay three quarters of the Province taxes.

Nearly one half of the whole quantity of land was leased on these terms, and the remainder was reserved for *common* lands. But this arrangement was satisfactory neither to the trustees or tenants,—*not* to the trustees, because the payment of three quarters of the Province taxes consumed all the rents,—*not* to the tenants, because the leases contained no covenants that they should be renewed after the expiration of the term for the benefit of the original lessees, their heirs, or assignees. In 1735, about 3000 acres of this land was set off to the town of Upton.

In 1741, an act of the General Court was passed, reducing the rent to one penny sterling an acre for the remainder of the term of ninety-nine years, and securing to the tenants the right of renewing their leases at an annual rent, not exceeding three pence sterling an acre forever after. The trustees were also authorized to convey all the *common* lands to the tenants in fee simple, and a separate registry of deeds for these lands was established.

New indentures were executed between the trustees and tenants, and the rents collected according to the provisions of this act until 1782; when the General Court, on a representation that great inconveniences had arisen in the collection of the rents to both trustees and tenants, passed a resolve that these lands should be taxed for the term of seven years in the same manner as lands held in fee simple were taxed, and out of the taxes the Collectors should pay the rents to the treasurer of the trustees.

In 1787, another Resolve was passed, directing the treasurer of the commonwealth henceforward, to receive all the taxes and pay the rents. This was accordingly done until the year 1823, when the triple rents, amounting to $666, 66, became due, and the governor refused to draw his warrant for this increased sum. The trustees made frequent but unsuccessful applications to the Legislature for the payment of this sum. In 1825, the Judges of the Supreme Judicial Court on a question submitted to them by an order of the House of Representatives, decided that the commonwealth was not under legal obligation, to pay the rents to the trustees of the Hopkins' donation. In consequence of this decision, the trustees in 1826, commenced suits against several of the tenants, who for more than 40 years had been entirely exempted from the payment of the rent.

But such difficulties occurred in the prosecution of these suits, that the trustees again memorialized the Legislature, which in March 1830, appointed commissioners to investigate the subject, and to make report of their doings, and in what manner the claims of the said trustees *can* and *ought* to be adjusted. The commissioners made a long and able report to the Legislature at its session in June 1830, which was referred to the next session of the Legislature, and finally came to no satisfactory result.

In 1832, after the trustees had made such preparations as would probably ensure them success, the tenants presented a petition to the Legislature, representing that they had no other

alternative, but to submit to claims, the equity and justice of which they could not admit, or to enter upon an interminable legal warfare, the consequences of which would be most disastrous.

On the 22d of March, 1832, a resolve was passed, authorizing the payment of 8,000 dollars from the State Treasury on condition, that the tenants should raise such further sum in addition to the 8,000, as the trustees would accept in full discharge of all claims in law, or in equity, against the commonwealth, and against the tenants. The trustees subsequently consented to receive the sum of $2,000 in addition to the grant of the state; and that sum was promptly paid by the tenants on the 4th day of October 1832, and full releases were executed on that day by the trustees, to the commonwealth, and the tenants. Accordingly, these lands *are free*, as are our other lands. Yes, I repeat it, they *are free* from that vexatious incumbrance. Thus was terminated a controversy, which in its consequences, threatened to be more disastrous to the tenants, than would have been a conflagration, which should have reduced to ashes every dwelling place upon these lands.

Our ancestors, though poor, and remotely located from each other, did not forget the *education* of their children. Filial affection is strong; but parental is stronger. No separation, no lapse of time, no decay of nature, can subdue it. Our fathers felt all that attachment for their children, as what we now feel. But, what could they do for their education? They could do but little more than *think* and *grieve*. They could fix their eye, upon the wide-spreading oak, but could see no school-house. They could hear the yell of the red man, reverberating through the forest, but not the voice of the schoolmaster. Nevertheless, they did what they could. I find on their records, that in some of the first years of their political existence, they could raise but $20, to $25 for schooling. While sitting and rejoicing as we do to day, under the goodly shadow of this wide-spreading tree, can we realize, that it is

the same, which one hundred years ago was a mere twig, exposed to be nipped by the frost, or withered for the want of nourishment? Hardly possible! And yet the fact we are forced to believe.

In turning over many pages of the *civil history* of this town, I find nothing more than of ordinary importance, until I come to the American Revolution. Here are pages of deep interest — pages, written with tears and with blood — pages, which *we* their children ought to transcribe, as with the point of a diamond on the speaking marble. Our fathers *now* resting in their graves, possessed the spirit of *civil liberty*. They knew their rights, and felt disposed to defend them at the point of the bayonet. When, therefore, the grievances imposed by the Crown, had become too many, and too mighty to be tamely endured, they were prepared to second every worthy measure for the resistance of oppression; and embark their ease, their comforts, their property, and their lives in one common struggle for freedom. They felt as though they were not born to be slaves.

In proof of this, I will read one or two of their resolves, passed *unanimously* at a meeting, March 26, 1770.— "Therefore, *Resolved*, that we will treat with contempt, all those persons that do continue to import goods from Great Britain contrary to the *non-importation* agreement, and that we will look upon such men with detestation, who, for the sake of their own *private interest*, are willing to reduce their posterity, and their country to a state of abject slavery."

"Therefore, *Resolved*, that we will not purchase, or drink any foreign teas, until the revenue acts are repealed; and that we will discountenance in our families the wearing of, or using any foreign superfluities, and that we will use every lawful method in our power, to encourage our own manufactures." The blood shed upon the plains of Lexington, did but inspire them with more zeal in the cause of their bleeding country. They had an attachment to their rocky soil, to their families, to their firesides, and to their altars, yet, at the beat of the drum, and the

hoarse sounding trumpet, they were ready to march. And they did march. Hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder they went, fathers and sons together through the Revolution. They suffered — they fought, they bled, and, with *others*, they conquered.

Thus at the expense of much blood and treasure, of much labor and sorrow, God gave to *our* fathers the glory, and the happiness of leaving to their children, the precious inheritance of liberty and independence. What a legacy! Who in possession of it, does not feel himself rich! This event will forever stand as an important era in the history of nations — it will be handed down from fathers to children, yes, *down* until the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, and awake the slumbers of the dead.

The adoption of the Federal Constitution, is another important article in the civil history of this town. On this all-obsorbing subject, our fathers acted with great *decision* and *unanimity*, when it was spread before them for their rejection, or adoption. At the close of the war, it was found that the articles of confederation, which had been sanctioned by the states, were wholly inadequate to the successful management of the various interests of the union. What can now be done? A new experiment must be tried — it may kill or save the patient. Who, at this interesting crisis, did not look on with trembling anxiety. The sages of the country were convened in council, with her Washington at their head. And, after a laborious consultation for many months, in which the clashing interests of the several states appeared in all their force, the Convention agreed to recommend the present constitution of the United States. And this instrument, the fruit of wisdom, talent, and patriotism, *our fathers* adopted, and was finally adopted by all the States in the union.

The year 1786, was rendered memorable by an *insurrection* in this state. This, however, I should pass over in silence, had not *this town* been very seriously agitated by the rising and gathering of that portentous cloud. A heavy debt

lying on the state, a decay of trade and manufactures, a great depreciation, and scarcity of money, and above all, the debts due from individuals to each other, were the primary causes of this difficulty. The disposition to insurgency was not confined to Massachusetts. New Hampshire was in a flame. But the flame in that state, as well as in this, was soon extinguished. A few lives only were lost. The cloud passed by; the sun burst forth in its meridian splendor, and peace again waved her banner over the troubled waters.

In 1814, the alarm of war was again sounded. It vibrated on every ear. Our fathers were summoned to contend in arms with that power, from which they had been so miraculously delivered. Did they obey? They did. They were not indifferent spectators to the alarming state of their country. It was enough for them to know, that an invasion by the enemy was seriously contemplated. They were therefore willing to co-operate with *others* in arms, rather than to relinquish those rights which had been purchased by so much blood and treasure.

Having considered the *civil*, I will now pass to the *ecclesiastical* history of the town. In a short time after our fathers had assumed the functions of a corporate body, they set themselves to find out a place for the worship of their God, and for the regular dispensation of the ordinances of the gospel. In this they acted wisely. Though poor, they would have been still *poorer*, had they have lived without the administration of the word.

A Christian temple has a benign influence on the human character and manners. It tends to curb the passions, to soften the heart, and to increase the social affections. Banish the institutions of religion, and what then? You banish with them the choicest blessings of social and domestic life. You annihilate those moral restraints which heaven has thrown around you. And this is not all. You let in a flood of vice to deluge the world. Under a full conviction of these facts, our pious progenitors, under all their discouragements, went

forward, and *resolved*, Nov. 10, after the act of incorporation, to build a house of worship. The site chosen to locate this house was on a part of the *old burying ground*, about fifty rods north of the south road leading to Mendon; and one mile from the centre of the town. The dimensions of the contemplated building were fixed at forty feet in length, and by thirty-five in breadth. At this meeting, one hundred pounds was raised to meet, in part, the expense. And, from year to year, small sums were assessed to finish the building. And here, let it be remembered, the house was *never* completed. From the time of the raising, it was twelve years, before there was a pulpit. Five years passed off, before the house was all glazed; and a long time rough boards were substituted for seats, in the place of pews. Do any ask, why this delay? There was a reason. And we should be satisfied with the reason, had we have lived, at the time they did, and have been placed under the same trying circumstances. It was not for the want of zeal for God. It was not because they wished to dwell in their ceiled houses, and let the Lord's house lie waste. No, they had the spirit of the pilgrims. Shall the plain truth be told? This delay was *wholly* on account of their extreme indigence. They did what they could.

There are no records, showing *when* the Congregational Church was organized in this place. But little doubt remains, however, that one was formed, soon after the town was incorporated. For I find on the 18th of August following, the Church proceeded to give Mr. Thomas Weld a call to become their pastor. This call he accepted; but, was not ordained until January the 4th, 1738. The town proposed to give him a settlement of £150, old tenor, as it was called, being about $66, 66, Federal money, and £80 salary, equal to $33, 60.

The Rev. Mr. Weld continued in the ministry among this people, but a few years. In Dec. 1744, he was dismissed, and was afterwards installed in Middleborough, Mass. From

this place he was soon removed, and entered the army in the last French war, in the capacity of a chaplain, and there he died. As to his early life, the place of his nativity, his talents, his piety, his manner of preaching, or, at what College he was graduated, we can say nothing. There is no record, relating to any of these particulars.

The first candidate employed, after the dismission of Mr. Weld, was Mr. Nathaniel Tucker. The second was Mr. Silas Bret. The third was Mr Ezekiel Doge. To each of these candidates a call to settle was given; but neither of them was ordained.

In 1750, application was made to Mr. Elisha Fish, to come and preach to this people. He came, and in him they were united. On the 28th of January, 1751, he received a call from the church to become their pastor. This call he accepted, and on the 5th of June, the same year, he was solemnly inducted into the work of the Christian ministry. The salary proposed by the town, was £60 lawful money; and a settlement of £120. The Rev. Mr. Fish originated from Stonington, Connecticut, and was a graduate at Harvard College. In a sermon preached at his funeral, by Rev. Nathaniel Emmons D. D., the Christian and ministerial character of Mr. Fish was strikingly exhibited. To do justice to my venerable predecessor, and for the benefit of others, I will here use the language of his Biographer. "Descended from a religious family, and favored with a religious education, his attention was early awakened to the serious concerns of religion. And the better to prepare him for his own service, God was pleased to give him, for a long time, most clear and distressing views of the enmity, malignity, and total corruption of the human heart. But at length, his darkness and distress abated, and he enjoyed a comfortable hope. Being fully satisfied, that it was his duty to prepare himself to preach the gospel, he surmounted peculiar difficulties, and obtained a liberal education. After entering upon the work of the ministry, he made a point of explaining the gospel, and of giving his hearers a clear, con-

nected, and extensive view of the great scheme of redemption. He shunned not to declare all the counsel of God. As he loved the gospel, and the souls of men, so he preached with uncommon fervor and zeal, which never failed to convince his hearers, that he earnestly sought their highest good. He took uncommon pains to instruct his people *in private* as well as in public." The observation was often made concerning him, that, if he entered into company, something serious dropped from his lips. "At the head of his family, he taught religion both by precept and example. In *private life*, he carried religion into all places, and into all companies. Though he wore not a sad countenance, yet sobriety and gravity marked his whole deportment.

"It is natural to suppose, that such a pious and exemplary man, possessed of a strong and penetrating mind, must have been very extensively useful. And so he was. He greatly promoted the temporal and spiritual interests of his own people. His ministerial labors were crowned from time to time with singular success. His occasional publications have served the cause of liberty and religion. And his vigorous exertions in Ecclesiastical Councils, have done essential benefit to the Churches of Christ, for which he will be held in long and grateful remembrance."

I ought, perhaps, here to add, that Mr. Fish did not pass through his long and successful ministry without his trials. He met with many things which had a tendency to cool his love, shake his faith, and weaken his resolution. Not, but what he usually had the confidence, and enjoyed the affection of his people, yet, owing to the peculiar pressure of the times, and especially at some seasons, that he was obliged to subject himself and family to the most strict economy, in order to enjoy a comfortable subsistence. I have been told by Deacon Henry Fish, his youngest son, that at one time, his father's salary was insufficient to furnish him with his ordinary meals on the sabbath. This was owing to the great depreciation of money.

But instead of fainting and despairing, he surmounted every obstacle, and steadily pursued the path of duty, trusting in God. Having put his hand to the plough, he never looked back, but with all his heart and strength followed the Lord, and promoted the great interests of his kingdom. The last sermon that he ever preached, was upon these words: — "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." The Rev. Mr. Fish departed this life, August 6, 1795, in the 76th year of his age, and the 44th of his ministry. He was married to Miss Hannah Forbes of Westborough. He had nine children, four sons, and five daughters. Two of whom he educated, and were worthy ministers of the gospel.

On the second Sabbath in June, 1795, I preached for the first time in this place. I received a call from the church on the 17th of December following, to be their pastor. On the 31st of the same month, the town assembled, to see if they would concur with the church. I will here use the words as they stand on the records: — "*Voted unanimously* to unite with the church, in calling Mr. Benjamin Wood to the work of the ministry in this place, and give him two hundred pounds for a settlement, and eighty pounds annually, for encouragement and support to settle with us."

My answer to this invitation was delayed, until March 12, 1796, when I *then* gave an answer in the affirmative. On the *first* day of June, the same year, I was here consecrated to the pastoral office. Finding my salary altogether inadequate for a comfortable support, the town in about 15 years from the time of my ordination, generously made an addition of £40; and, from that time to this, I have received $400 *annually*, and, this has been punctually paid.

I have now almost completed 39 years of my ministry.

I am sensible, that I have been greatly deficient in zeal, and engagedness of spirit, considering the infinite importance of the cause which I have been called to plead. But, I think I can say before God, who searcheth the heart, that I have uniformly studied and preached what I verily believed to be *the truth.* It has been my design, to unfold the great and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, and to inculcate the important duties of Christianity. And, I desire to acknowledge with gratitude to God, and to you, that I have enjoyed among you that degree of peace, respect, and friendship. And, it has often been a matter of wonder, that while many of my brethren in the ministry, far more deserving than myself, have either been dismissed, or fallen into broils and difficulties with their people, that I should pass so many years in quietude with my own. Yes, I have often had frequent testimonials of your sympathies in sickness — repeated instances of your liberality, and, for which, I give you my hearty thanks.

In 1834, those who were the supporters of Congregational order, were legally organized into a parish; and invested with all parochial privileges. This new organization, instead of diminishing its physical strength, has increased it. And, should nothing disturb the peace and the harmony of this parish, *their house* must soon be enlarged, or, a *new one* built for their accommodation.

If, you are not already fatigued, you will now go back with me, almost a century, and survey a scene of a very different character; yet, strikingly illustrating the mercy, and the faithfulness of *our* and our father's God. The subject to which I allude, is, the troubled state into which the town was thrown, in attempting to *move* the meeting-house that was first built. The spot on which it stood, was undoubtedly the most convenient, at the time it was built, to accommodate the people. But, as the inhabitants multiplied, and new settlements taken up in differ-

ent sections, serious objections were made to its location. It therefore became a question of no small importance, under the *then* existing circumstances; whether to finish the house, and let it remain, or, to *move* it to a different place, or, to build a *new one*, provided they could agree where to locate it. As there were different interests, so there were different opinions; and this led to a long and unhappy contention. Yes, like the ocean, when roused by a furious wind, it continues in a state of agitation long after the tempest has gone by.

The first object of the town was to ascertain the centre. Ater surveying, it was found to be on the plain, not far from the *new* burying ground, on the Westborough road. Three sites were pitched upon. The centre was one — the ground on which the meeting-house *now* stands was another, — and the third, was on a small hill, usually called the meeting-house hill.

After making a number of unsuccessful attempts for a *union*, the town at length agreed, to refer the subject to a disinterested Committee, and abide by their decision. Capt. Edward Davis of Oxford, Hezekiah Rice of Framingham, Col. Oliver Wilder of Lancaster, Maj. Daniel Hayward of Worcester, and Capt. Caleb Hill of Douglass were this Committee. At the next meeting, June 24, 1761, a strenuous effort was made to rescind the vote, respecting calling the Committee; and it was accordingly effected. At the same time, the town passed a vote to let the meeting-house stand for seven years; and, at the expiration of that time, to move it to the spot where this house now stands. This long armistice, only served to give the several contending parties more strength, and to inspire each with higher hopes of success. Meeting on the battle ground, May 22, 1768, for the first time, after this long cessation of arms, their strength was tried on the following articles. Will the town now proceed to

move the meeting-house to the spot agreed upon, June 24, 1761? — passed in the negative. Will the town divide into two separate parishes? — passed in the negative. Will the town raise a Committee, who shall give us their *advice* in our present divided state? — passed in the *affirmative*. The Committee were Jonathan Livermore of Northborough, Samuel Read of Uxbridge, William Jennison of Mendon, and Hezekiah Taylor of Grafton. Pursuant to this proposal, this Committee met; and their result is in the following words.

"Having taken into serious consideration your complaints, and your different opinions; and, after a very patient hearing of all parties so deeply concerned, we are of the opinion, that it will be best for the inhabitants of this town, to let their meeting-house remain where it now is; being fully satisfied that the town will be divided into two parishes, before many years. All things therefore being duly considered, we thus judge."

After this result was made, I find but little said about *moving* the old house, but *much* about dividing the town — dividing into two parishes — and *much* about building a *new house*, and the *spot* where it shall stand. On almost every page of their records this warfare is kept up, in one shape or another. Meeting after meeting is called, and seemingly to no purpose. Thus, the difficulty continued, until 1770, when the majority of the town agreed to build a *new house;* and, we are assembled in that *very house*, built by our fathers, all of whom are now resting in their graves.

The storm having passed by, the town then agreed with Col. Ezra Wood to build their house; and by him the whole work was completed to their acceptance. Though the frame has stood 65 years, yet the external appearance of the house has changed, as well as the heads that planned, and the hands employed in rearing it. For in 1821,

this house underwent a thorough repair. The inside work was all removed, and refitted in a more convenient and tasteful manner. The belfry at this time was erected; the bell was procured by the liberality of its inhabitants, and the clock which reminds us every hour of the rapid flight of time, was presented to the town by George Holbrook, Esq. of Medway; and for which he is justly entitled to our grateful acknowledgements.

Previous to 1811, the Church in this place had no confession of faith; nothing more was read to the members, at the time of their admission, than a *covenant.* In Feb. 1812, they adopted a confession, embracing the most essential articles of their belief, and their covenant was subjected to a revision.

At the same time a Standing Committee was raised, for the purpose of examining those, expressing a wish to join their communion: and, if upon examination, the Committee is satisfied, they are acccordingly propounded, and stand propounded four weeks before the congregation. *Then*, if no valid objection, has been made to their admission, they present themselves before the Church and people, and the brethren, if satisfied, vote to receive them; and they publicly and solemnly, take upon them God's holy covenant.

The doctrine professed by this Church is *highly Calvinistic;* and it has continued so during every period of her existence. Though there may have been, perhaps, trifling shades of difference, at different times, in relation to points of minor importance, but on the fundamental articles, there has *always* been a union of sentiment — and, while we have walked in the *old* paths, in which our pious and venerated fathers have trodden, and which *we* have deemed the good, and the right, and the safe way. I would here observe, we mean to judge no one, we mean to condemn no one. We readily yield to all the right of thinking, of deciding, and of acting for themselves, under their responsibility to God. We claim *only* for ourselves the same privilege. To his own master every one must stand or fall. This Church has ever shown itself friendly to *revi-*

vals of religion. She has not only rejoiced in these signal blessings when conferred, but she has also, from time to time made appropriate efforts to obtain them. Days of prayer, with fasting have been observed, to ask of God the effusion of his Spirit. And, it appears from her records, that the Church has not wrestled, and labored in vain. *This Zion* has been repeatedly favored with seasons of special visitations.

I look back to the days of my much beloved predecessor, and I find revival after revival of religion took place under his ministration. Here the word spoken by him, and by others, was carried to the conscience and to the heart with a divine power. At one time within these hallowed walls did the voice of Whitefield fall, in demonstration of the Spirit, on the ears of breathless hearers. During the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Fish, 110 were admitted into the Church, and 464 were baptized.

Since the year 1796, God in mercy has visited this people, once and again with heavenly showers. I have here witnessed *five* special revivals. The most admitted on any Sabbath were 42. From the time of my ordination, to the present, 234 have been received into the Church, 310 baptized, and 271 couples entered into the marriage covenant.

I can find no record, that gives any account of the number, that was admitted during the ministry of Mr. Weld; but, I will *suppose* that *fifty* were received to church fellowship: It will then appear, according to the most accurate calculation, that I have been able to make, that from the commencement of the century to the close, there were admitted 394 to the communion, 869 baptized, 644 joined in marriage, 3,000 births, 1,350 departed this life.

O, how pleasing, and yet how solemn the thought, that these walls which echo this voice, have resounded with the instructions and petitions, and praises, and warnings, and invitations of generations whose lips have long been silent in death, and whose spirits are far advanced along the ages of eternity; and that here our children and children's children may sit under the

means which God has instituted, and habitually blessed to prepare men for the heavenly state. And, as this dear Church of the ever blessed God has lived, and still lives, the same in doctrine, and the same in spirit, we are permitted to indulge the joyful hope, that she will still live, even till its members shall triumph in the brightness of mellennial glory. Here you are permitted from Sabbath to Sabbath to listen to the same gospel which Weld, and the pious and devoted Fish dispensed to their dying hearers. Here, too, is shed down the same Holy Spirit, who then made *the truth* effectual in the salvation of lost men. And here, we trust, will continue to be preached, that same *blessed truth*, with yet greater fidelity and power. Yes, from this, and yonder consecrated spot* has gone forth, for an *hundred years*, a life giving influence, that has blessed multitudes, and diffused itself far and wide. And, this influence, we are encouraged to hope, is still to go forth, with increasing power, and sending back richer blessings, till the dominion of truth and holiness shall be established among all nations.

Beside the Congregationalists, there is also a Baptist society in this town. From the best documents I have before me, the Church was organized in the year 1770. It was then weak and feeble. Not being able to support a minister, its members united with the Congregational Church, so far as to *commune* with them, claiming the right of hearing preachers of their own denomination, whenever they could be obtained. Elder Bois was the first, that labored with them for any considerable time. Not far from 1790, they gave a call to Mr. Simeon Snow. This invitation, he accepted, and was ordained their pastor. After preaching with them for several years, he removed to the state of Vermont, and there changed his religious sentiments, respecting the subjects of baptism. After his

* Referring to the old meeting house.

removal, the Church and Society like others, had their seasons of prosperity and adversity. Sometimes they had preaching, and, then, again they had none. As they had no meeting house, they met in a school house for worship. Among others that preached, Elder Sawyer, and Elder Smith were stationed among them. Soon after, the Church and Society were favored with the labors of Elder Dexter Bullard. He was among them five or six years. Though Mr. Bullard had not the advantage of a collegiate education, yet he was a man of very respectable talents, agreeable in his manners, and much beloved as a neighbor. This Church has enjoyed the special tokens of God's love and care. She has been blessed with a number of revivals, and, especially, under the ministry of Elders Sawyer and Bullard. At present, they have no settled minister or meeting house. But, still there exists a Church, and a duly organized society, and sustain meetings occasionally.

Beside the Congregational and Baptist societies, there is one of Universalists. This Society was incorporated, the 9th of March, 1825, and took the name of the First Universal Society in Upton. At present it is not large. They have no meeting house, or settled minister. They have, however, preaching occasionally on the Sabbath. Though these several religious societies that have been named, differ in their sentiments, yet this difference, has not been the occasion of any hardness *among us*, but an interchange of good neighborhood, and kind feeling is mutually reciprocated.

Those who have sustained the office of deacon in the Church, are John Warfield, James Bradish, Jonas Warren, Amos Bradish, Daniel Fisk, Jun., Samuel Forbush, Rufus Fletcher, William Hale, Enoch Batchelor, and Rufus Fletcher. The last two are deacons in the Baptist Church. The first three have departed this life.

Eleven gentlemen have received a collegiate education, who have belonged to the town. They are,—

*Rev. ELISHA FISH,
*Rev. MOSES WARREN,
*Rev. HOLLOWAY FISH,
Rev. ELISHA FISK,
Mr. AMAZA FISK,
Mr. STEPHEN RAWSON,
*Mr. ELIAS FISK,
Rev. JOHN FORBUSH,
Rev. ALBERT W. FISK,
Rev. CHARLES FORBUSH, and
Mr. ISAAC N. STODDARD.
Mr. HENRY CHAPIN is now a member of the Senior Class in Brown University.

I am happy in adding to this list two other professional gentlemen, that we claim as our sons, the Rev. Rufus Johnson of Grafton, and Dr. Levi Rawson, living in the same town.

I have now considered the *civil* and the *ecclesiastical* history of the town, during the last century. The brief sketch that I have given, is defective, owing in part to the want of time, but more to feeble health. What remains will be some closing remarks. And,

1. What great changes have *here* taken place. We look back, but a little more than a century, and all our lands in the town were in an uncultivated state. Here, roamed the wild beasts of the forest. Here, the woods resounded with the feathered songsters. Not a tree had fallen by the axe, not a foot of ground was under cultivation, not a building for a habitation, unless the Indian's wigwam, not a road. Wrapt in her wintry shroud, nature herself lay still and lifeless. But, mark the contrast, — what a change! We now witness a population of 1300 souls, occupying 240 dwelling houses, and also within a few years, there have been erected seven neat and convenient school houses. Thus by the hand of industry, the hills have become plains, vallies covered with flocks, and meadows waving with luxuriant grass. O, could our fathers, who struck the first blows on these hills and plains, awake, and rise from their graves, and see what we *now* see, they would be struck with admiration, and exclaim,

* Dead.

what a change! What surprising improvements have been made by our children — our sons and daughters! Can this be Upton!

2. How vain and transitory is all worldly greatness! It is like the meteor, which gives a momentary flash, and then expires. Where are the Alexanders, and the Cæsars — where are all they, whose names struck terror through the world? They were, — but their glory is departed. O, where is the beloved Washington, who headed our armies and fought our battles? The enclosure on Mount Vernon contains all of him that was mortal.

I ask, too, where are the venerable ancestors of this town, who, after much consultation, petitioned for the act of incorporation, organized a Church, built the first meeting house, settled a minister, and thus laid the foundation, for the maintenance of our civil and religious institutions — they are all gone — their dust has long slept in the earth, awaiting the morning of the resurrection.

And cannot we, by impressive memory, summon, as it were, from the invisible world, the dear and honored forms of neighbors, intimate friends, parents, children, husbands and wives — and does not our imagination fill up with the same many of these pews, which, they were accustomed to occupy? But, we may go from pew to pew, and from seat to seat, and they will not be there; they can neither join in our praises, or prayers, nor participate in this centennial festival. What is the amount of worldly greatness with all its dazzling and captivating appendages? "Vanity and vexation of spirit." The anxieties and solicitude, the hopes and the fears, the disappointment and successes which alternately occupy and agitate the mind, at length, come to one issue, and death settles the account. "The voice said, cry. And he said, what shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field."

3. How ought the hand of God to be acknowledged in the bestowment of all our blessings. All national blessings are from him. Every good gift comes from the Father of lights. He watched over our fathers, when planted on these shores. When brought to the brink of destruction, he made bare his arm for their salvation. He enabled them to detect and baffle the counsels of their enemies, and raised up, and qualified men to lead them on to conquest and glory. Why has such success attended the measures of our national government, that peace and prosperity have been so extensively diffused over the land? Let the voice of inspiration decide. "The Lord reigneth."

The same kind hand, that has blessed the nation, has shielded, sustained, and prospered the inhabitants of this town, from the commencement of the century, which closes upon us to day. Had it not been for the superintending agency of God, we should have died in the cradle. We could not brace a muscle, draw a breath, or move a limb without God. In all our toils, adversities, perils and escapes, God has been our preserver. In him we have had our being. We may all say, to-day, hitherto hath the Lord helped us. He hath been on our right and left hand.

I well know, in the pride of his heart, man imagines himself to be equal almost to any enterprize. What can elude his penetration, what can resist his power, what can fatigue his industry! Nevertheless, the stammering of a child betrays his purpose, the rustling of a leaf melts his resolution, and a stone cut out of the mountain, and hurled at him by an invisible hand, prostrates in a moment all his boasted energies.

4. We see in the light of what has been said, that interests of immense value will soon be committed into the hands of the rising generation. The fathers, now holding important stations will soon be gone. Their children,

then, will fill their places, both in church and state. Yes, into their hands will be transmitted, all our civil and religious interests — interests that *we* hold dear. Will you guard them, dear youths, as you would life, by all the influence you can exert, when we are sleeping? May we close our eyes, believing that they will be safe in *your hands?* Shall they be handed down to future generations *unimpaired?* The best pledge, you can give us of this assurance, is, by decorating yourselves with the Christian armor. Let the Bible, and nothing but the Bible, be impressed on your minds, as the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Put on then, the insignia of immortality — the breast-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation. Girt about with truth, and armed with the sword of the Spirit, rally round the standard of the Lord. Then the God of *our* fathers will be your God.

We have been looking back a century. It will now be important, that we cast an eye *forward* to the end of the century, which we have now begun. But our vision is obstructed by the thick darkness, that is before us. Who can disclose the sealed book? Who can tell what mighty changes will have taken place in families, in towns, in states, and among the nations of the earth? Not one. As well might the fluttering bird, presume to dive into years before the flood, or with bold adventurous wing attempt to soar into the heavens, and declare the wonders of the world of spirits. One thing, however, is certain — though system may succeed system, and one revolution follow another in quick succession, *the eternal purpose* — the great plan of God — will remain unshaken as the pillars of heaven. Contingency can have no effect on the *counsels* of him, who seeth the end from the beginning, and saith, my *counsel* shall stand.

Another century, my dear hearers, will come. The sun will rise, and the years will roll off — but, where, O where, will *then* be the families that compose this congregation — where the Pastor — where the members that compose the Church — where these aged men — where those in the meridian of life — and where these children and youth? Gone. *All* gone. And where? Their bodies to the grave, and their souls in eternity. Affecting thought!

Accordingly, other feet will tread the soil, that we now cultivate. These houses that we have built, will be inhabited by other occupants, others will walk up and down these roads. Other pastors will fill this sacred desk, other communicants will surround this sacramental board, and other voices will be raised, in celebrating *hallelujahs* to God and the Lamb.

When, therefore, our kindred dust is mingling in yonder field, with the ashes of our dear departed friends, when this house is removed by age, and our descendants of many generations shall point the stranger to this spot, and say, *there* our fathers worshipped; *then* may we be found standing before the throne, our crowns brightened, and our harps sounding sweeter, and louder, and louder, in the high praises of Him, who has been our God, and the God of our fathers.

ODE,

By Charles Thurber, A. M., *of Worcester. Sung at the Centennial Celebration, June* 25, 1835.

Hark! hark! the deserts ring,
The haughty forest king
Sings free as air;
His dance, with mirth crown'd high,
His fires, that light the sky,
His wild deer, tripping by,
His joy declare.

A century rolls along —
Hushed is the chieftain's song;
His dance is done;
His fires illume no more;
His deer to exile pour;
His sons desert the shore;
He loved to roam.

At Art's transforming cell,
The howling forests fall,
And bud and bloom;
Fell Slavery flees away,
And Freedom's sons to day,
Thus sing the festal lay,
Of "home, sweet home."

Let pearl-decked India shine,
France boast her sunny vine,
Peru her ore;
Kind Heaven has never strown
Such radiant blessings down,
On any, as my own,
My native shore.

No rocking earthquake shakes,
No wild Tornado breaks,
And ruin spreads;
But plenty's magic wand,
Strews blessings o'er my land,
And Freedom's liberal hand,
Her Treasures sheds.

No gaudy Court is here,
No sceptered Monarchs rear
Their blood-stained throne;
Fields, decked with fruit and flower,
Mild sky and genial shower,
Wise laws for rich and poor,
Are all my own.

And when I look around,
Beyond the circling bound
That clasps *this* vale,
And see Columbia's pride,
Her wealth on every side,
Her thundering fleets that ride,
With every gale.

Her lakes and streams that pour
Her wealth from shore to shore,
On every hand,
Young hearts, with bliss fill'd high,
To enjoy the rich supply;
I hail with extacy
"My native land."

Then in His praise awake!
Who gives us to partake
This vast supply;
The God of WASHINGTON,
Who led his armies on,
And made, *triumphant*, won
Fair Liberty.

And when a Century's fled;
And we are with the dead,
Our sons that day,
Their Country's praise will sing;
To us, one thought they'll bring,
To freedom's God and King,
Their Loudest lay.

UPTON CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION.

Thursday, the 25th ult., commenced the second century of the corporate existence of the town of Upton. The day will be long remembered by many. The morning was delightful, and was ushered in, in the manner usual upon such occasions. A numerous collection of the citizens of Upton and of the neighboring, towns; assembled to participate in the exercises of the day. At 11 o'clock, A. M. a procession, consisting of nearly 1500 persons, was formed under the direction of Mr. Lyman Stodard, the Marshal of the day, and was escorted to the Meeting House by the respectable and well disciplined volunteer corps, commanded by Capt. Wood. The exercises at the Meeting House were of a highly interesting character. The music, under the direction of Col. Daniel Newhall, was performed in a manner entirely satisfactory to the numerous auditory. To say that it was excellent, would hardly express our feelings, when listening to the voices of some of the most accomplished vocalists in New England. An Ode, which had been composed for the occasion by Charles Thurber, Esq., was sung with much effect in the tune, "America." An address was delivered by the Rev. Ben-

jamin Wood, the venerable Pastor of the Congregational Church in Upton. The address contained a correct and lucid history of the town during the past century, and was delivered in a strain of lofty and touching eloquence, which deeply affected a large portion of the assembly. The Orator, standing as a beacon between the present generation and their fathers, pointed his hearers backward to the most prominent events in their past history, and forward to the future duties of themselves and their posterity, in a manner highly creditable to himself, and highly interesting and instructive to others. Parts were taken in the exercises by the Rev. Messrs. Fisk of Wrentham, Long of Milford, Johnson of Grafton, and Forbush of Northbridge.

At the conclusion of the exercises, the procession again formed and proceeded to the table where 700 persons partook a dinner prepared by Mr. Joseph Perry, at which Daniel Fisk, Esq., presided, assisted by Doct. John Starkweather and Mr. O. Walker as Vice Presidents. We were sorry to perceive that many were compelled to leave the celebration *dinnerless*, from the impossibility of procuring tickets for the table. No blame however can be attached to any one, as there was a much larger collection than had been expected. The utmost harmony and good order prevailed, and nothing disagreeable occured to mar the festivities of the day. Numerous strangers of high respectability were present, and if we were to draw an inference from the facts in the case, we should not hesitate to say, that the people of Upton commenced the new century in prosperous circumstances, and upon good terms with their neighbors.

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